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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray

O God, You have given us the great hope that Your kingdom shall come on Earth. Use the Members of this body to work for that glorious day when Your will is done on Earth even as it is done in heaven. Open the minds of our Senators to the counsels of eternal wisdom, breathing into their souls Your peace which passes understanding. Give them the grace to seek first Your kingdom and help them to grow as You add to them all things needful. Lord, empower them through exemplary living to make this Nation a shining city upon a hill.

We pray in Your gracious Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable TOM UDALL led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 31, 2011.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator

from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we are continuing to work very hard to avoid the terrible consequences that would come with a government shutdown. As Vice President BIDEN announced last night after a 1½-hour meeting we had in his office just a few feet from where I speak, the Democrats and Republicans have agreed upon a number on which to base our budget cuts. That number is \$73 billion below the President's budget proposal. Now we have to get to that \$73 billion number.

As I said all along, this is not just about dollars and deficits; it is about principles and priorities. What we cut is much more important than how much we cut. The media is very concerned with which party will win this fight politically. I am much more concerned with making sure the American people do not lose out on this program we are doing. We have to make sure the cuts do not damage the basic fiber of our country.

Let me once again remind the Senate that children, students, teachers, nurses, and seniors would be significantly hurt by the cuts in the Republican-passed H.R. 1. The tea party is here today. They are here demonstrating that H.R. 1 should be followed—\$100 billion—damaging children, students, teachers, nurses, seniors, and many other people in this

country. H.R. 1 is not a piece of legislation of which anyone should be proud. Not a single child, not a single student, not a single teacher, not a single nurse, not a single police officer, not a single senior led us into this recession—not one. Punishing innocent bystanders will not lead us to a recovery.

We will continue talking and continue working to find a middle ground. Again, we have agreed on a number. We have not agreed on how to get to that number. I hope an agreement can be reached as to how we get to that number, but it will not come on the backs of middle-class families and the jobs they need, and it will not come if the other side continues to insist on unreasonable and unrealistic tea party cuts.

I appreciate Speaker BOEHNER and the rest of his Republican leadership in the House. What a tremendously difficult job they have. I am sure it is not easy trying to negotiate with the tea party screaming in their ears.

We have a lot more work to do. This country is at a crossroads in a lot of different ways. The economy is recovering—not as much and not as rapidly as we would like, but we cannot have what is going on here with the tea party demonstrating all these very harsh cuts, unrealistic riders, punishing innocent folks just for political ideology.

We have a lot more to do. I hope this latest development is the beginning of the end of this crisis because, remember, this is not the only crisis we as a country are dealing with. We have about a score of ships from our Navy trying to help the good people of Japan. We have a big situation going on in the Middle East, not only in Libya but all over the Middle East. We have a war going on in Afghanistan. As I speak, we have men and women whose lives are on the line in Afghanistan. We are trying to draw down in Iraq. We have a lot of issues we need to deal with.

We know there have to be budget cuts, and we are willing to do that. But

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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